

SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH

DEVOTED TO THE ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

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WHOLE NO. 201.

The Principles of Nature.

FAITH A BASIC ELEMENT OF THE SOUL.

If I rise in an audience, and proceed to testify to some fact, which I assert I have personally witnessed, what effect will be produced upon the various minds of the hearers? That evidently will depend upon quite a variety of circumstances. If I am known to be a man of good observing powers, a man of truth, and the fact I testify to have personally witnessed, is a common one, I shall be believed. If I am known to be no carter for the truth, to be a poor observer, prone to exaggerate, I shall be doubted. If the fact is very extraordinary, my testimony alone would probably be doubted, even if I was known to be a good observer and a man of truth. They would not believe that I willfully made a wrong statement; but knowing the many sources of illusion, they would doubt—perhaps even doubt the fact. If I was known to be in the habit of making mis-statements, I should be entirely disbelieved.

What is it, now, to know a truth, to believe, to doubt, and to disbelieve?

If I state to the audience that, as a physician, I have seen today ten persons manifesting the peculiar phenomena exhibited by those affected by fever and ague, if it be a truth, I shall know it. Those who know me to be a physician and a man of truth, can not absolutely know it, but will believe it. Those who know nothing of me, except that I am very apt to exaggerate, will doubt me. Those who know me to be very untruthful, and have had personal experience that there were no cases of fever and ague in the vicinity, will disbelieve me.

Knowledge I define to be a firm, sure conviction and certainty of the mind as to anything, from the evidence being so overwhelming as not to leave room for the least doubt. We know all the abstract truths of mathematics which relate to quantities and magnitudes.

We know all the intuitive truths, which are seen by the interior eye of intuition, to be truths. Thus we know that we live and hate, think and remember, believe and disbelieve, are happy or in pain; that every thing that begins to be has a sufficient cause; that qualities imply a substance; that men ought to do right, and ought not to do wrong.

We know, also, whatever we personally witness with our outer senses in the outer world. I know I am writing; you know you are reading, etc.

We know, also, other external facts that have been testified to by so many good observers of good character, as to have produced in our minds an absolute, undoubting conviction of the fact, though it has never been witnessed personally by us. In this case, the fact must be a common one, or not contradictory to usual human experiences. Thus, do I not know absolutely that there was such a phenomenon as Napoleon Bonaparte, as London, as the Alps, that I have never seen them? Do I merely believe in these, or can I truly say, I know that they were?

Now as to belief: If I rise and state a fact, as a case of fever and ague, I know that fact, for I witnessed it. You, who were not with me, do not know it; but, as you have ever found a man of truth, a good observer, and are aware that cases of that disease are frequent, the testimony for so much exceeds that against the statement, you believe me. You can convert mere belief into knowledge by personally witnessing the fact for yourself. For instance, you can go yourself immediately to the place and person, and can witness for yourself what I had told you. Then you merely believe, now you know.

If you go, and the patient is found unwell, but denies that he has been sick with ague; if you had always found me and the man equally truthful or untruthful, you would not know that he had or had not been thus sick. You would doubt.

If you had generally found the man truthful and me untruthful, you would disbelieve me, and believe the man.

If the man had been at work for you, under your own eye, during the very time I stated he was sick, you would know that I was stating an untruth, and the man a truth.

Knowledge, then, is the universal testimony of intuition and external sensation to a fact.

Let us analyze this process of the mind, by which we arrive at knowledge. Why do I know I am writing, or you that you are reading? Our senses bear testimony to our consciousness that we are doing thus. Our senses are witnesses as to the fact, to the inner sense or consciousness, and consciousness is a witness to the innermost Me.

But why do we believe our senses? Because we have always found them reliable under usual circumstances; we have found we could depend upon them. In one word, because we are so made as to have faith in what they tell us. We believe our senses because we innately have faith in their testimony. We have faith in our eyes, because we are conscious of seeing, and we have faith in our consciousness from our human nature. We can not help it. We assume always and forever, that we may implicitly depend upon, and trust and confide in, the testimony of our internal and external senses in healthy conditions.

We know, then, because we have faith in our internal and external senses.

Faith means implicit trust, complete confidence, in a sure feeling, that we may safely depend upon, trust in, and confide our lives to somebody or something. I know the sun shines, because I have faith in my eye. I know I see, because I have faith in my own consciousness. One step further: Faith in intuition, in consciousness, implies some absolute good and truth, that underlies intuition and consciousness, or else why should I believe in, have faith in, trust in, and depend upon, with sure trustfulness, my ultimate, innermost consciousness? If I did not have an innate faith in the absolute goodness and truth of my Maker, why should I any more believe than disbelieve the testimony of my internal and external senses? Think, and you will perceive that innate though unsuspected faith in the absolute goodness and truth of God; and thus innate trust and dependence upon such absolute perfection, underlies all phenomena of life in the human world.

Thus we confide in the evidence of consciousness and intuition, because we have, as the deepest element of our nature, faith in absolute goodness and truth; and, as goodness and truth can not exist merely as abstract qualities, but imply a substance, a reality, a person in whom they inhere, and of whom they are properties, therefore the ultimate fact or element in human nature is faith in an absolutely good and true person or man—our Maker, our God. If I did not assume that the love, wisdom and power, which is the cause of me, is perfect and absolute, I could trust to nothing, could depend upon nothing, could believe nothing, could know nothing, and should never dare to take the first step toward any purpose, and the inner and outer world would dissolve into chaos.

Faith, then, is the basis of knowledge. We can enlarge this general truth, and say that faith underlies all belief, which is more extensive than knowledge. We have faith in goodness and truth, and therefore we believe in the testimony of other persons, that they are to be trusted in, just in proportion to their goodness and truth. Thus, I believe in the general truths or facts of science, though I have not personally verified them by my own observation, because I have faith in scientific authority. I believe that the earth is so many million miles from the sun, not because I have personally verified all the phenomenal observations, and, using these as a basis, have gone over with the mathematical computations which give that result. No, I believe because I have faith in the goodness and truth of astronomers as a whole; so that if it was not true, the error would have been detected and exposed by some of them.

Why do children learn from parents and teachers? Because God has implanted in them, for good purposes, faith in what their parents and teachers tell them is true. In the infancy of the individual or collective man, this faith is necessary, and is only dispensed with, and superseded by, personal experience, as they are more developed, or become older; when the truths received in youth, by faith in authority, are authenticated or corrected by their personal experience, which thus substitutes faith in intuitive perception for faith in authority.

Let us briefly resume: Why does the child believe that the earth is turning on its axis every day, and rolling around the sun at the distance of so many million miles every year? He has faith, first, and as an ultimate fact, in his consciousness, that he has so been taught by his teacher; that so his sense of hearing has reported to him, and he has faith in his ears and eyes; and finally he has faith in his teacher, that he is good and true enough to be believed. Why does the astronomer believe the same facts? Because he has faith in his senses, and the conclusions of reason therefrom, and in his intuitive consciousness. He assumes that his senses and intuitions are good and true, as a basis for all the subsequent steps; and assuming that he can safely depend upon, and trust in, these, is assuming that there is an absolutely good and true cause for these senses, and for this very faith itself. See where we land.

Knowledge, then, is faith in inner and outer perception. Belief and opinion are faith in authority, or in the testimony of other persons' inner and outer perceptions. Belief in an affirmative is disbelieve of the opposite, or where the testimony is against any asserted truth or fact. Doubt is where the testimony is equal, or nearly equal, on both sides of an asserted truth or fact. Skepticism is the Greek term for examining. It means only impartial examination, or seeing, whether a thing be so or not. Whenever, then, one passes from faith in authority to faith in outer and inner experience, there must be a period of neither belief or disbelieve—when the man is observing and experiencing for himself—when he doubts. But let him honestly press on, and on the other side of these sterile, sandy and parched deserts of doubt, rise, already dimly visible in the horizon, the tops of the delectable mountains of knowledge, piercing blue and sunny skies, and melodious with cool, transparent fountains.

Is faith, then, an affair of the understanding, a belief; or is it, as I said, the fundamental fact, the basic state, or element, in the soul? Does it rise out of what the intellect is deficient in, or is it that upon which all belief, all disbelieve, all knowledge, all doubt depends? Are faith and belief synonymous? Or do you not believe or disbelieve, doubt or know, because you have faith in testimony, and ultimately in goodness and truth, in the invisible, unsounded depths of your soul?

So much for the relation of faith to intellectual processes, or the phenomena of mind. Let us see its power in the manifestations of human life, or the activities of human love seen therein. Faith, or a sweet, safe trust in goodness and truth, lies at the basis of all human acts, inward or outward. Behold the infant in his mother's bosom! There the inner eye can see what faith is. Faith! perfect, sure, happy, confiding faith in that mother's goodness and truth! Think where would love be without it! It is the basis of all love, as of all knowledge and belief. It is the inmost intuitive feeling of perfect confidence that you can

securely depend upon mother, wife and friend, and Him who is the maker of mother's love, of wife's love, of friend's true surety; who is the "author of all good and perfect gifts." By faith in the compass, that its unfailing finger points ever to the polar star, the trusting, watchful mariner steers his path over trackless waters, through darkness and storms, and brings his vessel to the desired haven in safety. As Schlegel well says, "Faith is the inner ear of the soul, which is open to, catches up, and retains the imparted word of a higher revelation"—whisperings from that brighter world, the home of the soul's true lovers, of our loved ones whom we are sighing for as the soul's true object, and whom we name FATHER.

Catch we a glimpse here of that Gospel truth, that "by faith we are to be saved"—not by intellectually believing any or all words uttered from heaven, but by trust, by confidence in the heart. Let us attempt, then, to ascertain, by the light of common sense, what Divine truth is wrapped up in the husk of this dogma, that "we are to be saved by faith."

When the body is sick—when there is pain for sweet, joyous health, nausea and disgust for what a healthy appetite could crave and enjoy; when there is weakness for elastic strength; when the intellect mistakes the creations of its own disordered dreams for sober realities; when physical and organic laws have been violated, and disease, disorder and pain are the effects—does that man need a Saviour? Oh, common sense! what does he want? Behold the drunkard paying for his violations of law with all the horrors of delirium tremens! Behold the glutton and the sluggard paying for his violations of law with dyspepsia! What do these men need? What does common sense say? They need, in order to be saved, to feel that they are indeed sick, and not well. That is the first need. Till that is felt, nothing can do them good; they are on the road to death. They must feel that they are sick and need a Redeemer—need a good and true friend who can save them from their disordered, insane condition. Suppose he has no faith in such a good and true helper. He will not send for the physician; he will probably die. But should he call to mind that Doctor Brown has apparently saved several of his friends who were in a similar condition; should he remember the excellent old man who for many years had the confidence of not only his father's family but of his whole neighborhood, and had the affectionate esteem of all who knew him, as a truly good man and wise and experienced physician; if he had himself often been a witness, and even a recipient, of his efficient skill, then, from faith in Doctor Brown, he sends for him. Faith makes him send for a helper. The doctor comes, sees his symptoms, traces out the causes, points out to the patient how his troubles came; tells him, first, what he must leave off doing, what violations of organic law he must cease; and then tells him what he must do, what the laws of health are that he must observe and keep: "Stop sinning, cease to do evil, learn to do right, repent, reform, and you shall gradually be a healthy, joyous man again." That is the prescription. The good physician gives him hope, encourages him to try to do better, says he will soon be himself again, and takes his leave.

Well, is the man saved? His faith in Doctor Brown has brought to him his helper. He has told him what he must leave off doing, and what he must do; it looks quite reasonable, and he sees it must indeed be so. Suppose, now, he says to himself, "This is indeed the plain truth; I believe it every word. That is the right creed; it is as clear as daylight. Doctor Brown is indeed the true helper I needed. I believe that very firmly; but it is a very troublesome thing to break off all these bad habits of mine, and faithfully set myself every hour of every day to do all those troublesome things he told me to do. No, I have so much belief in Doctor Brown, that I need not cease violating what he calls these organic laws; I really don't believe I have the power to do all he told me. My faith in his excellency as a physician shall save me. I would not derogate from his all-sufficiency by attempting to do anything myself, and thus appearing to claim some merit in my recovery of good health by my obedience. No, faith in Doctor Brown can save me!" But what does true faith effect? Faith in Doctor Brown makes him send for the physician; faith in the doctor, then, makes him faithfully follow the healer's prescription; it makes him cease doing wrong; it makes him begin doing right; and then it makes him persevere doing right, for he feels normal health returning to his body day by day, and he has faith that by thus doing he will surely be a healthy man again.

Look at Christendom. Behold a world sick at heart, using their human reason and freedom, to gratify their lower animal appetites and passions. See man, created a soul from Heaven, to love what God loves, to hunger and thirst for love, not just; for true wisdom, not sensual folly; to love the good, the true, the just, the right, the beautiful; to love all that would make him a true man, a divine man, and not an infernal monstrosity of selfish pride, lust and covetousness—and say not there is no need of a physician for a depraved, insane, suffering soul, that was sent here to be conjoined with the all-perfect in love and life by such love, and is sinking into spiritual death as fast as it can. "Is there need of physicians for the body, in whom it behooves us to have faith; and is there to the eye of common sense, no need of a Saviour of the man himself, of the spirit, from its vile appetites, which are the fountains of all evil? Are we soul-sick; or are our hearts all aglow with true manly love? Are we living our true, real lives of love, and guided by wisdom, or are we dying in unreal, insane dream-lives, full of evil and folly? Normal soul-life is to use our reason and our freedom, so as to

subordinate the animal man with its appetites to the joyous service of the spiritual man from above; to elevate our understanding to heavenly truth, and then in our freedom to choose and live the blessed life of love, of righteousness, of purity; to be recipients, willing, joyous recipients of perfect love, of the Divine. Is that our state? Are we in spiritual health? Do we love this blessed life of God and of true manhood? Do we not use our reason to plot ways to satiate the appetites and passions of our lower nature, of the mere animal man; and make the spiritual man seem thus to stoop, and degrade those appetites that in pure animals can not be so degraded, because they are guided by inexorable instinct? Is not our spiritual man subordinated to the animal, and thus our true life inverted from Divine order? Do we not thus use our manhood, our reason and our freedom, to sink lower than animals can, and thus become forms of infernal lusts, monsters, faces and features of vile appetites, depravities, that need not so much development as utter extinction; or, far worse, that knowing perfectly well my duty, I still do not love to do it? Let every man, as he loves the truth, look only into his own bosom, and answer. Is he, am I, a normal true man? Do we love what our reason tells us is good and true, and do we delight in doing it, as a perfect man would? What is it we feel so bitterly we need to be saved from, with a strong hand? Alas, not from ignorance chiefly, not from poverty chiefly, not from circumstances chiefly, for all these may be means that a true soul will use to grow strong by, but mostly from ourselves. It is a healthy symptom when we begin to feel this, and look round for some one to help us. Who can save us from ourselves, made up, as we see ourselves, of these passions, low appetites, lusts worse than animal, because not restrained by instinct but fed by reason, and guided by glowing torch-lights of insanity instead of the sun in heaven? Faith, confidence in the all good, can alone save us, as sure as man in the insane pleasures of the animal man would lead us fast down to loss of all true manhood and thus to the only death. Faith in goodness makes us wish to be good and thus well. Faith in truth makes us listen to Him who is the truth, to follow his pointing finger, to cease doing all that is wrong, "to shun evils as sins," and to begin doing right. Faith in goodness and truth can alone save us from our desperate condition, and it grows and strengthens as we climb the self-denying paths, till we find our old evil, wrong appetites lose their hold upon us, one after another, and we overcome them day by day, and learn to take delight, to relish our new soul-food, and find the healthful streams of celestial blessedness filling us with a sense of a true life.

Christendom thinks that Infinite wisdom came down to this our world to carry out a scheme to enable man to retain all his vile lusts and to save him from the wrath of Infinite Love, and by "faith in the vicarious sufferings of Christ," to enable the sinner, with all his natural selfishness and spiritual depraved attractions, to enter Heaven! Not that He provided a way or means by which man could be saved from the only evil in the world—his depraved, debased, infernal self-love and pride and self-sufficiency; but that he might retain these as a real good and take them with him into those celestial realms! The old heathen, Socrates, thought and taught that "to act unjustly is the second of evils in magnitude; but to act unjustly and not to suffer just punishment therefor, is the greatest and chief of all evils;" that "if a man has committed injustice, either himself or any one else for whom he has regard, he ought of his own accord to betake himself thither, where as soon as possible he will be visited, to a judge as to a physician, taking every pains lest the disease of injustice, becoming inveterate, should render the soul corrupt and incurable." Thus spoke the old heathen, while Christendom thinks that Christianity is only a Divine scheme to enable sinners to carry their vile loads to those starry heights, and pre-eminently to escape the just punishment their injustice, their self-love, their sectarian hate, deserve. Christianity, according to current, fashionable creeds, is not a way to cure, by censure and crosses, and torments of thorns and drafts of gall and vinegar, the sick-soul, full of all vile, unmanly lusts—monsters dragging man down to far other homes than those to which love calls him. No; "evangelical Christianity" is a perfectly orthodox creed of the intellect, and a firm persuasion that, love what vile things you may, and follow after them as holy as you may, only be it so as not to openly violate human law, God will not impute your villainy to you, if you only entertain this orthodox faith, but clothe you in the white robes of His Son's immaculate Divine life; and, instead of enabling you by His constant regenerating power to justify yourself by becoming just and a lover and doer of just things, that He will make believe you are just! Socrates said clearly that to be unjust and not to be punished therefor, even by the imperfect laws of man, was the greatest of all misfortunes; while orthodox Christendom are yet so innately in love with their terrible diseases, that they think God himself devised a plan by which they might escape the laws of His infinite perfection, the modes of His unfailing wisdom. A prayer, a cry from the heart that he would in His loving justice punish even to the death of the evil lust, each and every one of our violations of His laws, with His perfect justice, so as to cure us of our deadly tils and diseases, would be thought with blasphemy. But, O, kind Father, I thank thee that thou wilt punish each and

every one of my violations of Thy laws with such sure and perfect justice that I shall be saved from that sad attraction, if it be possible! What is God's justice, but another name of His mercy? Hear what the wise teacher of the coming ages says: "But it shall first be declared what the Divine mercy is. Divine mercy is the pure mercy of the Lord, displayed toward all the human races for their salvation. It is also continually present with every man, and never recedes from any one; so that every one that can possibly be saved, is saved. But no one can possibly be saved except by Divine means; which are those revealed by the Lord in the Word. Divine means are what are called Divine truths; these teach now man how to live in order that he may be saved. The Lord, by them as means, leads man to heaven; and, by them as means, implants in him the life of heaven. This the Lord does for all. But he may also implant the life (love) of heaven in any one, unless he obtain from evil; for evil is an obstacle in the way. In proportion, therefore, as man abstains from evil, the Lord leads him, by divine means, out of pure mercy; and this He does from his infancy to the end of his life in this world, and afterward to eternity. This is the Divine mercy which is meant. From these observations it is evident that the Lord's mercy is pure mercy, but not immediate mercy, or mercy unconnected with means; by which is meant, a mercy that saves all of mere good pleasure, let them have lived (loved) as they may.

The Lord never does anything contrary to order, because He is order itself. The Divine truth proceeding from the Lord is what constitutes order; and Divine truths are the laws of order, according to which it is that the Lord leads man. To save man, then, by immediate mercy, or mercy without means, is contrary to Divine order; and what is contrary to Divine order, is contrary to the Divine Being himself. Divine order is known as existing with man; this man has perverted in himself by a life (love) contrary to the laws of order, which are Divine truths; he is brought back into that order by the Lord, out of pure mercy by means of the laws of order; and in proportion to the degree of his restoration, he receives heaven within him; and he who has heaven within him, goes to heaven after death. Hence it is again evident that the Divine mercy of the Lord is pure mercy but not immediate mercy. (Swedenborg's H. and H., 522, 523.) The popular orthodox faith would send the sailor to navigate his ship over the pathless deep and to guide it with its rich freight into the distant port, with such a firm belief that the needle in his compass is pointing with unfailing finger to the moveless star, that he can safely leave it at home by the old family Bible in the "best room." To really take it to sea with him and watch it night and day, and to steer his practical way by its direction is quite of secondary importance—in fact not to be expected! Christ says: "Be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect." "Love God (Infinite Perfection) with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself!" Orthodox says: "This is evidently impossible faith in Christ's perfect manhood and his vicarious punishment, shall save us." Shall save us from what? "From God's punishment," you say; "from evil, from that which makes me love doing wrong, and dislike doing always and forever the perfectly right—from sin itself," the Gospel of good-will to man, says, "Which sounds as a clarion tone from the upper skies, and which a narcotic breath from the realms of infidelity and all human poisons! Where is the church that expects its members to live a Christ-like life? How many practical Christians in all Christendom! Where are our Christian nations that seek each other's welfare in their diplomacy? Where are the real practical infidels who cling to all their natural evil-loves and live to gratify them, on one hand, while on the other they are forever crying loudly, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" Anything is better and more easy to be believed, than the eternal, inexorable necessity of doing well in order to fare well, in this universe of God's!

What is, then, a saving faith? It is to feel that we are sick at soul, diseased, depraved in our central life, and tending to do wrong when we know it is wrong, but still doing it. It is, then, a means or way opened by which we may feel this life of death, and that there is a truer, higher life, and enabling us to feel some desire, however faint, to escape from our human degradation, and to aim at objects worthy of the soul. It is a corrective trust in the worth of consciousness and reason, a Divine, unseen, but ever-watchful fatherly presence and energy, that whispers to us in silent moments, of better, more glorious things, and teaching us by bitter experience our ignorance, our weakness, our strength and ability only to go astray and to fall, then leading us to trust entirely to His hand, His wisdom, His perfect sufficiency for the soul, and in His name to cast out devils, be cleansed from our leprovous ulcers, and made anew from the vile images of infernal lusts, that we were, into His likeness and image, becoming willing vessels, receptive of His life, and media for His love and wisdom to flow to all around us. The At-one-ment which Divine wisdom effects by the fact of the soul with God, its true life and object; not, by any manner of means, a way to enable the unjust soul to escape just punishment. God does not love sin quite well enough for that!

A saving faith in Jesus is a feeding of trust in Him as perfect goodness, and also trust manifested forth to the lowest sense as a perfect, divine man; the soul confiding in His ability as the good physician, and exhibiting its faith by following His precepts, "Love God in man," "Love the right, the just the pure. Whatever you perceive above you, these are the healthy appetites of the soul; and avoid, as deadly poisons, all

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